

CountyCitizen

Spring 2002

We're more than county employees, we're your neighbors miamidade.gov



Who are the People in your Neighborhood?

Your Friends and
Neighbors in
Miami-Dade County

You are Here
Life after Redistricting

United We Gave
\$1.5 Million Raised for
United Way

Lucky Dog
Chloe, the bulldog, gets
a Home for the Holidays

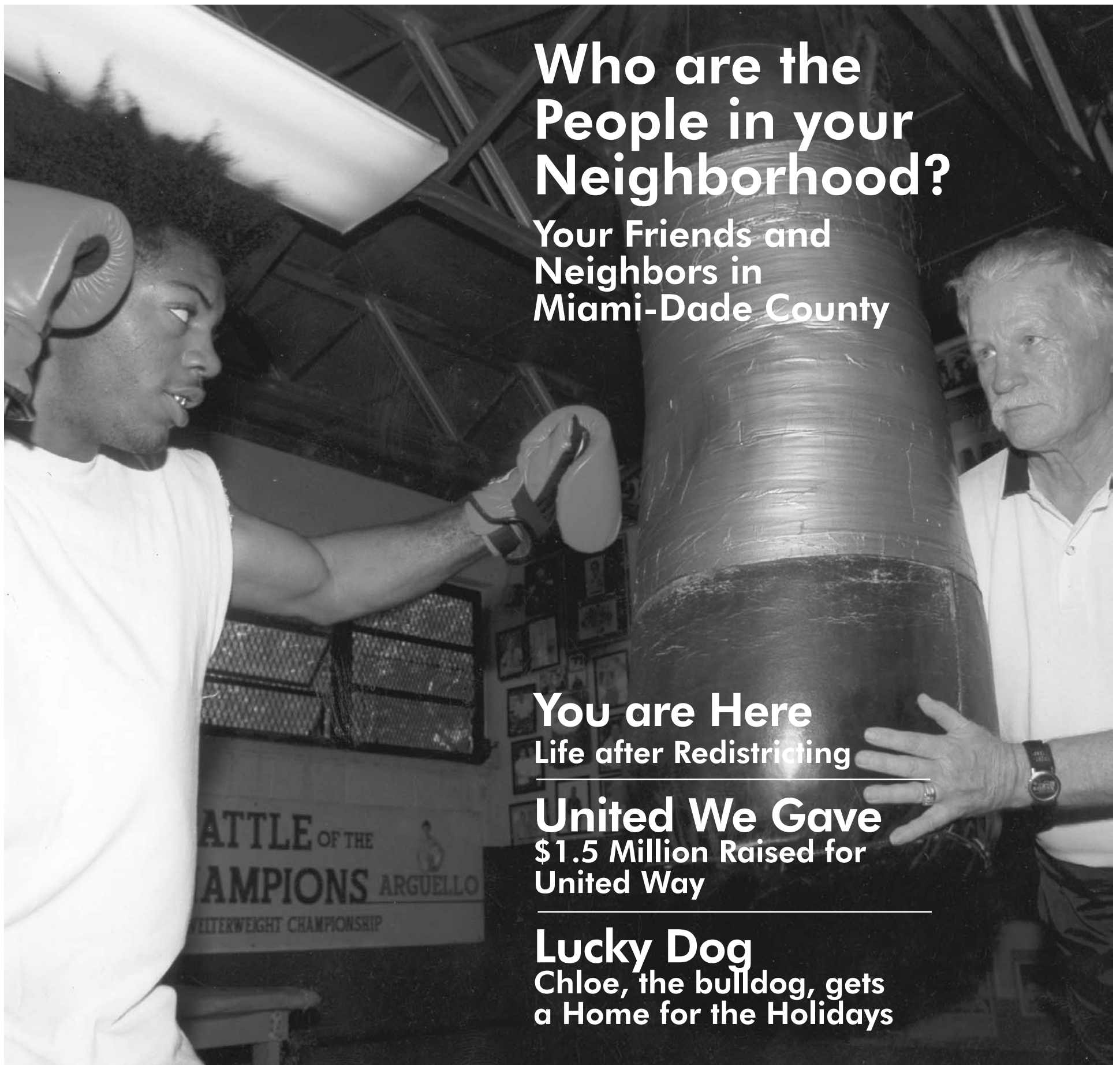


TABLE *of Contents*

2

Speaking Of: Why Good News is Interesting

United We Gave:
United Way
Campaign raises \$1.5 million

3

You Are Here:
What's changed after redistricting

Chloe Gets a New 'Leash' on Life

4

Good Answers:

- Homestead exemption made easy
- Free hurricane shutters for seniors

News and Notes

5

Good Tidings:

- County Manager's 13th Annual Toy Drive
- Fire department knits warm fuzzies for cardiac kids
- Building department lifts spirits at Jackson

6

Good People:

- Captain Ricardo Roig serves county and country

7

Good Business:

- Procurement management reaches out

Good Government:

- Government made simple

8

Good, Clean Fun

Cut It Out

On the cover Dwayne Simpson, director of boxing at Parks and Recreation, training with up-and-comer, Gus Rahming.

SPEAKING *Of*

Good news is interesting

What is news? That's a question that journalists and everyday people deal with on a daily basis and given this era of wireless, 24-hour news, it's fair to say that it is a question that is dealt with on an hour-by-hour and even minute-by-minute basis.

Notwithstanding these technological dynamics, the gatekeepers of news have defined it as a mix of what a community wants to know and what they need to know. Most of the time they get it right, but limits on time and resources often mean that media can only tell part of the story. All too often it's the bad part. So after reading the morning paper or watching an hour of evening news, it's no wonder that our world – indeed, our community – can seem pretty bleak.

So, what can we do about it?

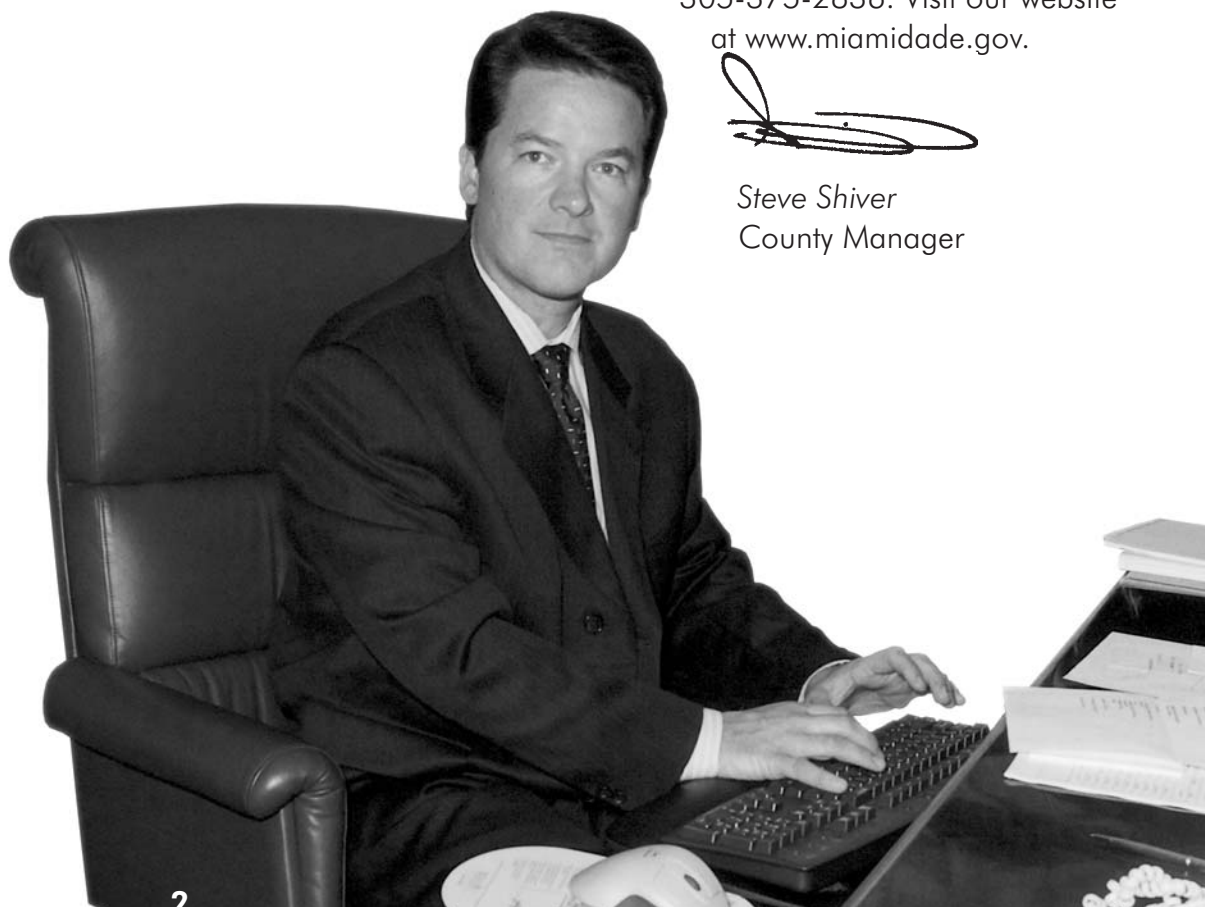
This first edition of the *County Citizen* is a start. In it we will publish the good works our 30,000 county employees do each and every day. Multiply that by 365 days in the year and you have over 10 million opportunities to learn that we are more than just county employees, we're good neighbors, doing good things for the community – our community and yours. These are things that rarely make the headlines or qualify as "breaking news," but matter, all the same, to the people who live, work and play here.

You'll learn about how to help an aging grandmother get free hurricane shutters, or about how the county collected and distributed over 2,000 holiday toys to give to disadvantaged children. You'll read about how everyday employees work part-time in the military to keep us secure, or what we're doing to rescue abandoned or lost pets and find homes for them. We think this is good, newsworthy material. People ought to hear about it and be proud of their community.

Your ideas, comments, and suggestions count. If you like what you read or want us to address an issue important to you, send us a note at news@miamidade.gov or call 305-375-2836. Visit our website at www.miamidade.gov.



Steve Shiver
County Manager



united we gave

This month the county manager Steve Shiver handed over a check for \$1,535,704 to the United Way – the biggest contribution in Miami-Dade County's history of fundraising for the agency. The check represents the fundraising efforts of the county's 45 departments comprising a workforce of more than 30,000 employees. This year's contributions shattered last year's total by more than \$287,000.

As headlines reported declines in charitable giving around the nation, Miami-Dade County employees sweetened the pot, stoked, in part, by some nifty giveaways, games of chance and other imaginative money-raising events.

The big-ticket item this year was a vintage, 1970 Ford Thunderbird donated by Solid Waste director Andy Wilfork. An auto parts store worker won the car in a drawing held in October. The car raffle raised more than \$2,000. General Services Administration, the department that manages county buildings and parking facilities, raffled a much-coveted year of free parking – worth more than \$600 – to a single winner. The Water and Sewer department organized a fish-fry, soul food supper and raffled a cruise raising more than \$3,000. Even the county manager got in on the action by agreeing to get 'all wet' as the target in a dunking booth fundraiser organized by Parks and Recreation. At \$3 a shot, that event raised over \$160 in about 20 minutes.

"Fundraisers boost morale and increase awareness of United Way and its agencies," said Marla Warner who serves as the co-chair of the county's campaign. But the bulk of the money, she says, comes through payroll deductions.

Take the Communications department, for example. Last year, Communications – a department consisting of about 50 full-time employees – contributed \$1,803. This year with roughly the same number of employees, the department contributed \$4,398 – a 144 percent increase over their 2000 total. Their contributions came entirely from payroll deductions.

Earlier this year, the county manager challenged employees to increase their contributions by 10 percent. Employees answered that challenge increasing their giving by about 23 percent for a total of \$1,535,704 in contributions as of November 30. "I think these numbers reflect a collective awareness that our friends and neighbors right here are really being hit hard by the nation's economic challenges," Shiver said. "That has really personalized things for us. I am awed by the generosity and selflessness of our employees."



Golfer lines up shot at charity event on the links.

Chloe gets a new 'leash' on life

Life hasn't been easy for Chloe. She was abandoned by someone who no longer wanted her. Due to neglect, her teeth went bad, she picked up an eye infection and became a haven for ticks.



Chloe with the man of the house during the holidays.

But something happened to Chloe this Christmas. She found a home and a family that loves her. No longer is she sleeping in the streets, or in a steel cage. Today she snuggles up on the family sofa, and takes leisurely dips in the swimming pool. She plays with children, and perhaps soon, she'll have another dog in the

family to share in her good fortune.

On December 22, the Henry family made a three hour drive to the Miami-Dade County Animal Shelter from Port Charlotte. They had seen a picture of Chloe, a bulldog, and decided that she was the dog for them.

Chloe is one of thousands of dogs and cats that end up at the shelter each year, an average of 40 a day. Some are lost and are taken to the shelter in hopes that they will be reunited with their families. Others are abandoned by families that don't want them, or can no longer care for them. In years past, their fate was dismal, facing euthanasia if not claimed or adopted after five days. But that's no longer the case.

The Animal Services Unit has undergone sweeping changes with an innovative, compassionate and energetic police captain at the helm. Since Captain Mark Jeter's arrival at the shelter last June, adoptions have doubled to about 30-35 a day. Two to three adoption events are scheduled each month at various locations throughout the county and Jeter has instituted free spay and neuter services available at participating veterinary clinics, the Humane Society and at the Animal Shelter. Renovations are underway to make the shelter a more comfortable place for its four-legged tenants. All animals are vaccinated and treated for fleas and ticks and Jeter is seeking help and private funding for some of his initiatives.



For more information or to view photos of animals available for adoption, visit www.miamidade.gov or call 305-885-0377.

what's changed after redistricting

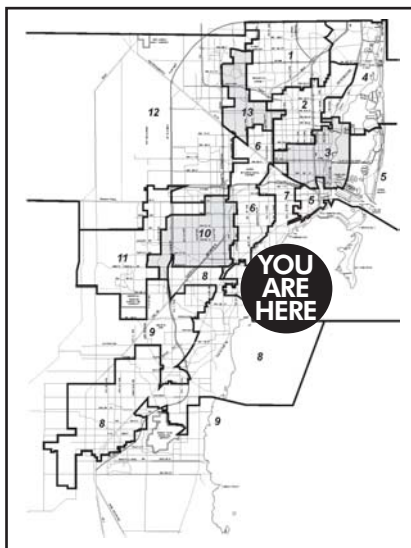
It's a new year and that may mean a new face in your neighborhood as commissioners reach out to their new constituents with flyers, town hall meetings and in person to inform them about the boundary changes that went into effect January 1.

As a result of population shifts reported in the 2000 U.S. Census report, the county was mandated by law to realign its 13 commission districts so that each one includes roughly 173,000 residents.

Existing districts were not radically altered. The boundary changes preserve the predominately black inner-city districts represented by Commissioners Betty T. Ferguson, Dorrin D. Rolle and Dr. Barabara Carey-Shuler. Some commissioners swapped a few precincts around the edges of their existing districts. Commissioner Natacha Seijas, District 13, acquired new communities west of Miami Lakes, Palm Springs North and Country Club of Miami, while ceding several precincts in Hialeah to Commissioner Dr. Miriam Alonso, District 12.

In addition to Westchester, Senator Javier Souto, District 10, now represents much of the Foutainbleau community. Commissioner Jimmy L. Morales, District 7, gave up several precincts in Little Havana to Commissioner Bruno A. Barreiro, District 5. Morales is now working on welcoming new residents in the communities of East Kendall and South Miami.

Find out who your commissioner is by logging on to www.miamidade.gov or calling 305-375-4600.



GOOD

Answers

I'm a new homeowner and I have to file for Homestead Exemption, but driving downtown is a real nightmare for me. Is there a way I can file without having to go downtown?

Now you can. For the first time, Miami-Dade County homeowners can file for Homestead Exemption by mail. The Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser's Office is mailing pre-printed Homestead Exemption applications to all properties where a deed was recorded in 2001. Instructions are printed both in English and Spanish and now all exemptions – including Homestead, Widow/Widower, Veterans, Senior Citizen, Disability – are included on one form. Apply for Homestead Exemption if you (1) bought a house during 2001 and reside there, (2) want to apply for additional exemptions such as Senior Citizen, Disability or Widow/Widower or (3) if you have placed property in a trust and continue to live there.

Homestead exemption can significantly decrease the amount of property taxes you pay by reducing the taxable amount of your property by more than \$25,000. The filing deadline for the 2002 Homestead Exemption is March 1, 2002.

There are new requirements for certain exemptions this year. Visit the county's website at www.miamidade.gov to find out what they are and if they apply to you or call the Property Appraiser's office at 305-375-4125.

If you don't think you'll be able to make the deadline filing by mail, you can visit any of the following locations until March 1, 2002 to file in person:

Stephen P. Clark Center
111 NW First Street (lobby)
Monday - Friday
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

South Dade Government Center
10710 SW 211 Street 2nd Floor
Monday - Friday
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Saturdays: February 9 & 23
8:30 a.m. to Noon

Hialeah Blanche Morton Center
300 East First Avenue
Mondays and Wednesdays
only 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Miami Beach City Hall
1700 Convention Center Drive
February 1 and 15 only
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Holy Family Catholic Church
14500 NE 11 Avenue
Tuesdays and Thursdays only
8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Saturdays: February 9 & 23
8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon

My parents really need hurricane shutters on their house but the cost is more than they can afford. They've applied for loans, but they are seniors living on a fixed income and they've had no luck. Is there some kind of government program out there that can help them out?

You're in luck. Miami-Dade County has a Project Impact Residential Shuttering Program that installs hurricane shutters on the homes of eligible senior citizens. Project Impact is a national program sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) whose purpose, according to its motto, is to build "disaster resistant communities." With a \$300,000 grant from FEMA and another \$1 million earmarked from the county, Project Impact planners are looking to install aluminum panel shutters on more than 1,200 homes throughout Miami-Dade County. To see if your parents qualify, call the county's Answer Center at 305-468-5900.

NEWS

and Notes

County gets international praise for conservation

Miami-Dade County made history winning the International Heritage Management Award at the Nations in Bloom 2001 Finals Competition in the first year the county has entered the competition. The award recognizes exceptional achievements in understanding and addressing issues sensitive to the environment. Finalists compete for only five possible awards in the following categories: "Community Involvement," "Planning for the Future," "Enhancement of the Landscape," "Heritage Management" and "Environmentally Sensitive Practices." Miami-Dade County won in the Heritage Management category recognized for preserving the 2,000

year-old Miami Circle, a 2.2-acre site that is thought to be part of a former Tequesta Indian village. The county was also congratulated for marine renewal efforts in Biscayne Bay, for its stewardship of Everglades National Park and for the Parks department's restoration and preservation of gardens at Vizcaya and at the Deering Estate devastated by Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Miami-Dade County was the only finalist from the United States to win a category award and the first organization from the United States to do so in the history of the competition.



Toll-free "Homeless Helpline" launched

During a memorial service in December, the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust announced a new toll-free "Homeless Helpline" to help people in Miami-Dade who are homeless – or nearly homeless – gain access to much-needed services. Before the Homeless Helpline, the only way homeless or nearly homeless people could access their

services was through referrals. The number will be posted on billboards and throughout the transit system as a steady reminder that help is just a phone call away. If you are homeless or nearly homeless, call 877-99 4 HELP.



Booknotes

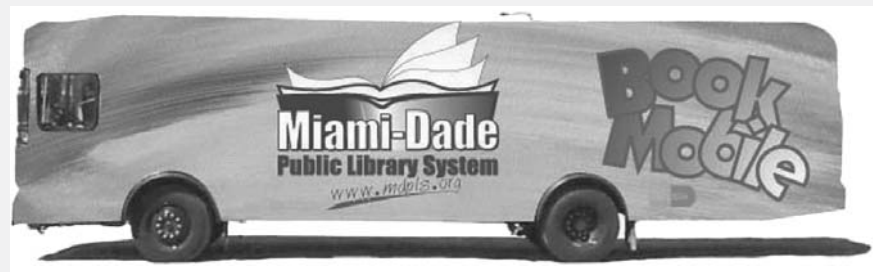
- The Miami-Dade Public

Library system is in the midst of one of the most aggressive library expansion programs in more than three decades. Work began on a new Miami Beach branch library with a Demolition Derby October 30. Library director Raymond Santiago and other community figures were present at the demolition, which marks the first phase in the construction of a new 47,000 square foot structure. The new library will be double the size of the existing branch and will feature a large auditorium, community meeting rooms, coffee bar, reading garden, and a children's center with activity rooms for arts and crafts, puppet shows and story times. The \$8.1 million branch is set for completion by the spring of 2003.

- Doors at the new Country Walk branch opened in January and in December a branch opened in the City of Hialeah Gardens. The new branch is the second of three mini libraries slated to open in the coming months.

• Bookmobiles hit the road

Two custom-built bookmobiles will be pressed into service in February. Sporting pastel colors and a modern design, these new vehicles will provide expanded library service and easier access to residents who are not near a branch library.

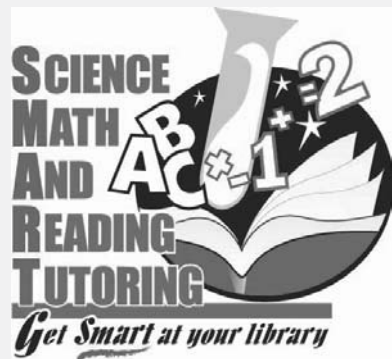


The bookmobiles are 37 feet long, with spacious interiors that will house materials for patrons of all ages. Each unit carries a collection of approximately 4,000 books including fiction and nonfiction selections and materials such as videotapes, audio books and large print materials. The new bookmobiles have laptop computers for remote access to the Miami-Dade Public Library System's online catalog, two central air conditioning units to ensure comfortable temperatures for its users, and a hydraulic lift for wheelchair access. Look for them at shopping centers, public parks, schools and other locations.

For more information, call the Mobile Library Services office at 305-480-1729 or email a message to powellw@mdpls.org.

• Get S.M.A.R.T.

The library system kicked off its newest library service, a free math, science and reading tutoring program for all children in kindergarten through 12th grade. The program, titled S.M.A.R.T (Science Math and Reading Tutoring), will run each Saturday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. during the school year from September through June. Certified, experienced teachers will be on hand at all 34 branches of the library system.



• Black History celebrated

In celebration of Black History Month, the library system will host a rich tapestry of programs and exhibitions in February and beyond that commemorate the contributions of African Americans to literature, history, art, theater and dance. Join authors at a series of Meet the Author forums including Miami-Dade's very own scholar and historian Dr. Marvin Dunn as well as Carita Swanson Vonk who wrote *Theodore Gibson: Priest, Prophet and Politician* about the life of the late Miami Civil Rights leader.

• Become a citizen

Free citizenship classes are being offered at the West Dade Regional Library, 9445 Coral Way, on Saturdays 10 a.m. - Noon. To register, please contact Romy Rosabal at 305-220-1302 and for course details call the West Dade Regional Library at 305-553-1134.

• Miami-Dade Now premieres on Miami-Dade TV

Miami-Dade TV is kicking off the New Year with a brand new show: *Miami-Dade Now*. This 30-minute news format program airs every night at 9 p.m. and will serve up the latest county news and information plus in-depth features and interviews with county newsmakers. New episodes premier every other week. Check www.miamidade.gov and select "Television" under "Find a Service" for all our programming information.



GOOD Tidings

Not All Elves Work In The North Pole

Some of them work in Miami-Dade County government shown here with county manager Steve Shiver amid a mountain of gifts that poured in from people all over Miami-Dade. The "elves" – who moonlight in the county's Human Services department – helped the county manager sort out more than 2,000 toys that were collected during the County Manager's 13th Annual Toy Drive. Hundreds of children identified by county social service agencies came to the Stephen P. Clark Center on December 21 for a hot meal at the newly opened Food Court. Afterward, Shiver and workers dressed in colorful elfin attire passed out the gifts to scores of children who were in very high spirits that day. Employees arranged for food donations, clowns and face-painting – a first in the toy drive's history.



County manager, Steve Shiver, among an avalanche of toys with Department of Human Services staff to help sort.

Books for troops

Jaci Raines, business analysts at the Information Technology Department initiated a Books to Troops program. Five boxes of books were collected and sent to our troops in Afghanistan. Books that could not be sent to Afghanistan due to romantic or religious content were sent to Bosnia and Kuwait.

Booster Shot of Holiday Cheer for Sick Kids at Jackson

Children at Jackson Memorial Hospital's Pediatric Dialysis Unit got a booster shot of holiday cheer when Power 96 DJs Miguel Perez and



Santa, played by Charlie Danger, director of the Building department with Power 96 DJ Miguel Perez and Jackson's littlest patients.

Tony "The Hitman" Hernandez and Santa Claus paid them a visit in December. Santa – played by Miami-Dade Building Department director Charles Danger – brought toys collected and donated by building department employees. Youngsters at both the Children's Cancer Unit and Pediatric Dialysis Unit of Jackson Memorial Hospital took a momentary

break from treatment to get a spiritual lift and a few toys. Though sick, the children were aglow with smiles and cheers as Santa worked the room.

"When children smile, they make the season brighter for everyone," said one nurse who was among a crowd of medical staff on hand for the event.

Fire Rescue dispatchers knit heartwarming fuzzies for kids at Miami Children's Hospital's Cardiac Unit

Miami-Dade Fire Rescue (MDFR) dispatchers in the Fire Alarm Office began a project this past holiday season that just may become a yearly tradition. They got together and decided to do something special for some very special children. In just three short months, the dispatchers hand-knitted 19 blankets and quilts of varying sizes and presented them to the children in the cardiac care ward of Miami Children's Hospital. From crocheted swaddling blankets to full-sized colorful quilts, the gifts featured children's motifs like Barbie and Mickey Mouse and, of course, the MDRF logo. The best moment was when a 7-year-old boy grabbed his new blanket, smiled and said "Oooh, thank you," and immediately snuggled up under it.

GOOD People

Ricardo Roig, is living a double life. By day he works as manager of Building Compliance Support at the Building Department. But at night, he slips out of his white collar and tie and into his fatigues and boots. Roig is a captain in the Florida Army

National Guard where he supervises over 100 soldiers at Miami International Airport (MIA).

As a manager in the Building department, he protects the public by ensuring the safety of buildings in Miami-Dade County. As a soldier in the National Guard, where he is Commander of the Alpha Company, his public safety responsibilities become a matter of national security.

"Our role at MIA is to enhance law enforcement and ensure that Federal Aviation Administration security directives are being followed by the security companies at passenger checkpoints throughout the airport," said Roig.

Roig and his troops have to stay in tip-top shape. They can be seen in MIA's parking garages performing rigorous physical training, running from the ground floor six levels up to the top level in full gear. Stamina is particularly important to Roig because of his busy schedule.

Typically, Roig completes his shift at the airport by 7 a.m. By 8 a.m., he reports for duty at the Building department where he remains until 2 p.m. "The work doesn't slow and the productivity cannot drop," Roig states.

He heads home to catch up on sleep and spend some quality time with his wife and two sons, ages 4 and 6. The six-year-old just got his first report card and, according to Roig, all was A-okay. "His grades were excellent," said Roig proudly. "The military teaches you high standards. Mediocrity can get someone hurt." Roig hopes to impart those same principles to his sons.



Roig at center talks safety with a young traveler.

By 9 p.m. Roig is back at MIA where he faces more physical training, inspection of troops, weapons and military assignments. During inspection Roig checks to see if weapons are maintained, uniforms are pressed, boots are polished and on other details that maintain the esprit de corps and uniformity of soldiers.

Roig's troops not only guard the passenger checkpoints but they also inspect all garbage cans, phone banks, postal boxes, potted plants and other objects to insure that every area at MIA is secure. "As a commissioned officer, you must lead by example, set high standards and create checks and balances so you don't let your guard down," Roig explains.

As an infantry captain, Roig must be attentive to the safety and welfare of his soldiers while taking care that FAA safety mandates are being efficiently carried out by military personnel. Providing that extra layer of security at the airport is rewarding for Roig who hopes that travelers will once again take to the skies with renewed confidence in air travel. And, Roig says, our economy could really use the boost.

In addition to military operations, Roig and his troops have been assigned to humanitarian missions. They provided water, food, shelter and other basic necessities to residents in the Goulds area of Miami-Dade County after Hurricane Andrew hit.

"When my community has needed my services and leadership abilities, I am there to do that whether it's related to security or humanitarian relief. If I were called to any military mission, I am ready to go and fulfill my duty to my country," Roig said.

They've Got What It Takes

Silas "Jimmy" Washington



Silas "Jimmy" Washington has come a long way since joining Miami International Airport as a semi-skilled worker in 1974. Today Jimmy is a terminal operations senior agent and part of the reason for his steady climb has been his ability to make use of opportunities and share his wisdom. Those qualities extend beyond his worklife. For the past 32 years Jimmy has been a volunteer at VISTA – Volunteers In Service To America – raising money to make the dream of college a reality for poor kids right in this community. Why does he do this? Because no one knows better than Jimmy what is possible when given the chance.

Dwayne Simpson

Dwayne Simpson gives kids growing up in tough circumstances a fighting chance. He's the boxing director for Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreation and in Dwayne's book, winning in boxing and in life is all about power and timing. Dwayne empowers young people to use their hands to keep themselves out of trouble so they're not out on the streets at the wrong time. At 66, Dwayne is old enough to retire but he shows up every day for work at the gym so he can make a difference in the lives of young people.



Mari Marques



Her occupation is paralegal assistant in the County Attorney's office, but her calling is something else altogether. Mari Marques makes several trips a year to remote regions of South and Central America. Her mission is simple: to nourish children inside and out. Mari and her church group not only bring food, medicine, clothing and money to the people in these villages, they also bring plenty of hugs and kisses and lots of "lap" time for children whose parents' struggle to provide subsistence for the family often leaves time for little else.

"There is so much need in these countries," Mari says. "But no matter how small the gesture, it makes a difference."

And so do you, Mari.

GOOD *e-Government*

Government Made Simple

In April 2001, the county launched its new web portal, www.miamidade.gov, unveiling a new design and approach in online service. The portal provides a window into county services and through this window users can make use of an array of online services such as paying a building re-inspection fee, adopting a pet, requesting a county service, renewing a library book or renewing a driver's license.

Three clicks to information

"The site is designed to deliver information to the user within three 'clicks' of the mouse," said Judi Zito, director of E-government for Miami-Dade County who worked with a team of technology and content professionals to take the tedium out of navigating through pages and pages of information. That team organized the content into groups targeted to specific kinds of online customers: residents, visitors, businesses and employees. Users of each group can easily locate news and information that is of most



Miami-Dade County's e-government team.

interest to them. They'll also find links to state and federal government information. An online suggestion box sends customer messages directly to the county manager cutting the distance between customers and decision-makers.

Public safety

The web portal proved an invaluable public safety tool for residents, schools, media and business during emergencies including Hurricane



Michelle, the months-long drought, and after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Last year the county added a feature to allow users to access live Fire Rescue dispatch calls from our 9-1-1 Computer Aided Dispatch System.

News on demand

A subscription service allows the public to sign up and receive news and information via email. By selecting from an assortment of categories, users can receive information on everything from emergency advisories to cultural events.

The e-government initiative continues to move transactions to the web. Parking tickets and building re-inspection fees can be paid online using a credit card. Customer water and sewer bills can be viewed online and soon residents will be

able to pay their water bill on line. On the Clerk's page, users can now perform a legal document search. It's all part of the county manager's goal to bring government closer to the people.

Do it online

Here is a quick look at some of the things you can do online at www.miamidade.gov:

- Request a county service
- Request a building inspection
- Pay a parking ticket
- Renew an occupational license
- Find/adopt a pet
- Search property records
- Find services near you
- Apply for a library card
- Find or renew a library book
- Search recorded documents
- Get transit information
- Get flight arrivals/departures
- Schedule a trash pick-up
- Order recycling bins
- Find a county job
- Register to vote
- Get a hunting/fishing license



GOOD *Business*



Ted Lucas, Director of Department of Procurement Management

Department of Procurement Management Reaches Out

The new Miami-Dade County Department of Procurement Management (DPM) is on a mission. It's in the midst of a sustained campaign to expand the vendor pool available to the county. Its goal is clear: to increase choices and improve quality.

"DPM purchases a vast array of goods and services to support departments throughout the county, and has a strong commitment to delivering the highest quality goods and the most efficient services to its citizens," said Theodore G. Lucas, director of DPM. "The budget to procure these goods and services exceeds \$900 million dollars annually. Our goal is to do this in the most cost-effective and efficient manner," Lucas said.

In May, Lucas met with representatives of local Chambers of Commerce and business associations to discuss opportunities for their members to partner with Miami-Dade County through the implementation of an "Outreach Program." This coalition of chambers and business associations are poised to strengthen the county's ability to reach a greater number of vendors, while providing important information to these civic organizations.

The Outreach Program's purpose is to improve the business community's ability to become successful suppliers of goods and services to the county by providing them with weekly updates about upcoming contracting opportunities available through these chamber and business organizations. "This link will become an important resource for these organizations in assisting their members in how to do business with Miami-Dade County," said Lucas.

The educational segment of the Outreach Program sponsors bid and proposal workshops to current and potential vendors. These workshops, which are held on the second and third Tuesday of each month, give vendors the opportunity to participate competitively in the county's procurement processes. The workshops are designed to increase public awareness, promote participation and reduce the number of non-responsive or deficient bids and proposals. To date, staff has presented 30 workshops and has trained approximately 700 vendors.

"Over time, the true success of the program will be measured by increased competition and reduced prices for goods and services to the county," said Lucas. "The Outreach initiatives are only a start at meeting the county's goal to educate all sectors of the business community in the procurement processes and in doing business with Miami-Dade County."

Lucas and his staff are available to speak at community and civic functions. To request a speaker from the Department of Procurement Management, call 305-375-4425. For a complete schedule of 2002 workshops and other useful information, visit the county website at www.miamidade.gov and link to the Department of Procurement Management.

GOOD

Clean, fun

You're busy, your kids are busy, but you still need time for fun. Or maybe all you need is to find something for the kids to do when school's out. Not to worry, we've taken a lot of the pain out of finding good, cheap fun leaving you with the best part: picking and choosing from the best that Miami-Dade has to offer.

No ordinary library

Books are great, but our libraries offer so much more. Not only is there plenty of stuff to see and read for every age, but our branches also offer fun and enriching activities including story time, Scrabble tournaments, computer classes, standardized test preparation, toddler time, yoga, language instruction, citizenship courses and even basic car mechanics. There are 34 branches in the Miami-Dade Public Library System and one of them has got a card with your name on it. To learn about the library's rich schedule of activities, call the branch near you or call 305-375-BOOK. You can also log on to www.mdpls.org.



What's a working parent to do?

School's out at three but quitting time isn't until five. Check out Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation after-school camps. Parks' camp counselors live up after-school hours with sports, indoor and outdoor games, special events, and much more. Camps are available during holiday breaks or teacher workdays too. Call 305-755-7800. If you want to throw in some educational activities take the kids to the Historical Museum of Southern Florida and let them explore 10,000 years of South Florida history. Discovery Day activities include arts and crafts, snack, live musical performances and lots of fun. The Historical Museum also offers Tropical

Explorers Spring and they're coming up April 1-5, June 24-28, July 8-10, and July 22-27, call 305-375-1492.

If your kids are into science – or you want them to be – check out camps at the Miami Museum of Science. Fun and educational, kids can learn about rocketry, photography, computers, water sports, magic,



art and design. For information on fees or to register for a camp, visit www.miamisci.org or call 305-646-4200.

Hands on, please

With the Miami Art Museum's free Second Saturday program, you and your children participate in a teacher-lead, hands-on exploration of the art world. Need a change from the usual happy hour? Go to a JAM at MAM every third Thursday of the month for an evening of art, entertainment and atmosphere. Call 305-375-3000.

Take a hike, or jump in a lake on an Eco-Adventure

Eco-Adventure Tours are designed to introduce not just visitors to some of South Florida's hidden natural treasures, but you too. Pick from a lineup of canoe trips, bike trips, kayaking, marine wading tours, wildlife encounters, bird watching, and van trips into some of the neatest remote wilderness areas of the Everglades, Big Cypress National Preserve, and coastal parks. Learn about historic facts and native wild and plant life. Discover what many around the world already know: some of the best things in nature are found right here.

Learn more about Eco-Adventures and other fun things to do at our parks, marinas, zoo and campgrounds at 305-755-7800 or visit www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/parks.

Life's a Zoo

Get a behind-the-scenes tour of Miami MetroZoo at Zoo Inn 6 p.m. - 9 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Or, bring in your little one for a story, live animals, crafts and more at Zoodler Academy. Call 305-255-5551 for details.



Ye olde tours

Yes, Miami-Dade does have history and you can learn all about it in one of the dozens of walking, bike, bay, river or bus tours offered by the Historical Museum of Southern Florida. These junkets take you through Miami-Dade's historical sites and others throughout South Florida. There are even overnight excursions for you and the family. With arresting names like the Mystery, Murder & Mayhem Bus Tour or the Everglades Muckabout and Backwater Ramble, who could resist? Call the Historical Museum of Southern Florida at 305-375-1492. If your tastes are slightly more tame walk the Deco district Saturday mornings at 10:30 a.m., Thursday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Call 305-672-2014 for details.

CUT

it Out

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Fire Non-Emergency.....786-331-5200

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Animal Services Unit.....305-884-1101
Bus and Rail Information.....305-770-3131
Center for Employment Hotline ...305-375-5725
Community Councils.....305-375-2842
Consumer Protection Hotline.....305-375-3677
Consumer Service Switchboard ...305-375-1250
County Manager.....305-375-1032
Jackson Health System305-585-1111
Libraries305-375-BOOK
Park & Recreation.....305-755-7800
Parking Violations305-275-1133

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Caleb Center305-636-2333
Northwest305-557-2171
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